13

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THE modern instances of the belief in simple faith or superstitious worship in the cure of disease, as exemplified in the almost daily reports of marvellous recoveries attributed to the efforts of "faith-curists," "mind-healers," "layers-on-of hands," and the like, furnish this century's analogue of the ancient custom of invoking the aid of the saints in the relief of the afflicted.

Superstition, Paul Lacroix has said, is the inevitable consequence of every religion or Deism, and to the simple, ignorant mind it naturally becomes more powerful than the religion itself, being more awe-inspiring and impressive. In the history of all nations and peoples the superstitious belief in the efficacy of deified personages in alleviating pathological lesions has prevailed.

In the ancient Pagan times the divinities were the precursors and parents of pathology—the old gods are dead, but the heavens and the maladies still retain their intimate relations. The patrons,

once placed in Olympia, were transferred to Paradise. In the heaven of the old Pagans there were supposed to be lodged a long succession of gods and goddesses, whose province was to look over the diverse maladies of humanity. The material sheath of our soul, with its miseries external and internal, was supposed to be carefully guarded by this collection of deities.

The matrons contemporary with Augustus Cæsar well knew whom to address for the correct manipulations and treatments of childbirth. In the first instance they prayed to Pertunda to facilitate advantageous union or meeting of the sexes. Then followed appeals to Mena, on whom depended the regularity of menstruation. Materprema had a special mission in keeping the uterus in condition for the proper reception of the male seed.

Having carefully and successfully pursued their respective functions up to date, these deities were dismissed, and, conception happily ensuing, Fluonia was summoned to care for the growing germ in the womb, and keep out the evils of abortion and miscarriage.

Then grand Diana stepped in, and looked to the preservation of the life of the fœtus. Juno Postversa labored to put it in good position, and stepped aside for Lucina, who was famous for her ability as an obstetrician, and with her little helpers, the Nixii, who pushed hard for the contractions, effected a safe delivery.

The members of the Celestial aristocracy having successfully brought the child to light continued their monopoly in the person of Jupiter Diespiter,

or possibly Cunina, to whose care the life of the child was entrusted. Throughout the period of lactation, with mystic passes over the breast, Rumilia produced a sufficient flow of milk.

Turning now to the more enlightened Christian woman of the latter period, we find her still happy in the protection of the plethoric heaven of sanctified personages, but to a less degree than her Pagan sisters. With the advent of Christianity, Saint Agatha replaced Rumilia in exercising an influence, for good or bad, as the case might be, over the female mammæ. Invocations to her were deemed the best means of relief from mammitis. The older Christain woman addressed her prayers to Notre-Dame-de-Montserrat, Saint Marguerite, and worshipped at Lourdes and at the statue of Saint Guignolet. The latter will soon be a thing of the past, if its original does not acquire a better degree of proficiency, as it is fast disappearing under the scratches of sterile husbands.

Happily, if parturition is seemingly neglected by the saints, the pathological disturbances of the human body are plentifully supplied with patrons and patronesses from this overworked society, each of whom has a designation, either curative or causative, in some disease. Saint Guy had under his domination the neurosis, chorea, often called "danse de Saint Guy," or St. Vitus' dance. Formerly they danced before the chapel of this saint to be relieved; but since the discovery of the efficacy of arsenic Saint Guy is neglected, and the neurologist has usurped his domain. Saint Giles struggled with the hopeless task of carcinoma,

besides lending adjunctory assistance to the others in the obstinate cases of epilepsy. Saint Gervasius gave many a sharp reminder to the unfortunate under his care, and has to-day a deadly rival in the lithiates and salicylates. His rheumatic clients are rapidly forsaking him, and, in fact, his memory is only perpetuated by an occasional charm or amulet among the lower classes. Saint Genou is fortunate in the possession of two helpers in the cure of gout, viz.: Saint Mor and Saint Gueslain. Coquillart bears witness to the efficacy of the former in his *Monologues des perrecques*, in which is seen "I come to Saint Mor des Forrez to be relieved of the gout." Homage is rendered to both these auxiliary saints in the old comedy, "Pasté et de la tarte," in which a character cries out,

"Que la goutte
De Sainct Mor et de Sainct Gueslain
Vous puyssiez tresbucher a plein."

In cases of toothache, each jumping pain was considered the individual handiwork of Saint Appolonia, and to her the victims of this distressing minor ill looked for relief. Our *confrères*, the dentists, have played sad havoc with this saintly lady, and, like Othello, "her occupation's gone."

By his good offices Saint Main saved the itching commoner from scratching. If we can correctly udge from a passage in Ambrose Paré (des Venins), this same individual brought succor to individuals afflicted with dermal manifestations of syphilis. Paré says: "An ointment of quicksilver cures what is called commonly the malady of Saint

Main;" and, after a glance through the *Commentaires sur Dioscoride* of Antoine du Pinét, we are lead to believe that this saint looked after other cutaneous eruptions such as tetter, eczema, milk rash, etc.

Saint Reine was a valuable constituent of this sanctified system of therapeusis, curing thrush and scald-head. Having recovered from a severe and terrible fever, ~~this Saint~~ a certain soldier went to church to give thanks for his recovery. Jesus was duly thanked, but, turning to a picture portraying Saint Anthony with a white beard, he said: "Y no a vos, barba blanca, que tan mal su fuego me trato, y me quemo en mis calenturas." This warrior was not willing to thank Saint Anthony with his white beard for the fire that had almost consumed him during his fever.

Saint Avertin, Saint Romain, Saint Gildas, and Saint Mathelin divided among themselves the various forms of mental aberration. In the very early days Gheel seems to have been a kind of Lourdes, for, according to the *Cornhill Magazine*, a certain St. Dympna, who lies buried there, was supposed to have *les faibles d'esprit* under her special protection. It was the custom, therefore, throughout the Netherlands for persons who had insane relatives to take them to her tomb and there offer special prayers to her for their recovery. If tradition is to be relied upon, the saint was by no means loath to give proof of her beneficent power, and wonderful stories are told of the way in which she used to restore reason to those who had lost it. Still, even in those times miracles were not wrought every day.

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Some of the sufferers who went to Gheel had to wait for months—nay, years—before they were healed, while others were never healed at all. And while waiting they had to be taken care of. At first the innocents, as St. Dympna's *protégés* were called, were all lodged in little huts or caves around the church, but as the fame of Gheel spread abroad they increased in number, and it became necessary to make other arrangements. They were then boarded out with the peasants living in the village, and there were so many of them that at length every family had its innocent. If a child was constantly crying and fretful, says Panckoucke, in his *Dictionnaire des Proverbes*, he was committed to the care of Saint Avertin. In his *Harangue de Midas*, Bruscambille writes: "There is no receipt compounded by any doctor or apothecary, no matter how wise, which is potent in the malady of Saint Avertin."

Saint Eutrope was supposed to cure hydrops, as we can see in the nouvelle cxxix of Bonaventure des Periers; but the invocations to this patron were in vain in the celebrated case of Louis XI. If M. Chéreau is well informed, Saint Eutrope (eau trop) is but one of that series of saints whose province originated solely from a quibble or witticism on their name. Eugène Noël advanced this theory, and gives a few examples. Saint Genou, who was the solace of those afflicted with rheumatic or gouty joints, was probably one of the number; Saint Mammard (mammelle) ripened the abscesses of the breast; Saint Marcou (mal au cou) was supposed to have the power of effacing scrofulous marks and

curing the King's evil; and Saint Fiacre carried solace to those unfortunate enough to suffer from affections about the anus—particularly vegetations —from the resemblance of Fiacre to "fic."

F. Brémond says the hypothesis of Noël becomes an absolute certainty in the case of the patron of the inhabitants of Lourcine and the Hospital du Midi, and quotes the interpretation of the name of this saint as given by his master Jacob. "The recoveries are divided between the saints, who take the monopoly of cure to themselves, and sometimes a saint has been invented expressly for the malady, as, for example, when the venereal malady first made its appearance there was soon found, where no one knows, a Saint Foutin to take the pox-stricken sufferers under his auspices."

From the North to the South, the saint most respected in sacred therapeutics is Saint Hubert. The number of individuals that he is reported to have cured of the "rage," or hydrophobia, is incalculable. He was given, it is true, the assistance of Saint Mathurin, but what help is he to the great patron of the chase, whose name is as familiar to the smooth chin as to the white beard, and we dispense with details, for this great patron had a glory which admits of no addition.

In the middle ages Saint Lazare was the busiest of all. In our times he is virtually in a lethargy of idleness. It is true that we continue to call some of the sanitary stations "Lazaret," but these are nearly always empty, and when they contain a patient his malady is far different from those of olden times. Saint Lazare was the guardian of the

leprous, more commonly called in France "ladres" or "mesels." In the 18th century, in France alone, there were more than two thousand hospitals for lepers. To-day, thanks to science, the universal vanquisher of cant, hypocrisy, and superstition, a case of leprosy is cause for excitement and discussion in all the journals and among those versed in this pathological rarity.

Saint Sebastian was invoked for the "peste venenosque," and had for his assistant Saint Roch. In *les Aventures du Baron de Foeneste*, d'Aubigné shows a Gascon who had fallen into the charnel-house of the plague stricken, and employs his priest to say a mass to Saint Roch. Like this Gascon, the pious inhabitants of a certain village in Provence, even to the 19th century, cry once a year "misèricorde" in the chapel of Saint Sebastian. In the south of France Saint Hermantaire is still supposed to look after children who are timorous, nervous, or who are subject to convulsions, and Saint Victor calms their fever. If one consults him, devout inhabitants of Marseilles will tell you that, after the Virgin Mary, no one possesses the power of more miracles than Saint Victor.

Saint Gerbold was much occupied with dysentery, while Saint Regnauld was not indifferent to those suffering with affections of the bladder. In all cases of colicky pains, whether from excesses in eating or otherwise, supplications were addressed to Saint Erasmus. To the bibulous was given a patron in the person of good Saint Martin. Needless to say, few candles were burned for him, as curing the

evil in this instance was worse misfortune than its continued existence.

If we consult Henry Estienne's *Apologie pour Herodoté*, in the preface of his edition of that great historian's work, we find that the curious duty of Saint Bernardin was to keep a guardian eye over the "suffocations of the matrix." If one should be asphyxiated, for relief he would invoke the aid of Saint Eloi.

The last alphabetically of this long list of pathological patrons was Saint Zachary, who cared for the dumb.

Félix Brémond, who was called to account by a friend for his campaign against superstition, and was accused of citing the customs of olden times with the present day in his arguments, denied the anachronism, and, among others, quoted from page 198 of *Pèlerinage de Saint Hubert*, by Abbé Bertrand, printed in Paris, 1869, the following: "In order to prevent the 'rage' they carry devoutedly on them objects blessed or which have touched the miraculous stole of Saint Hubert, such as crosses, rings, chaplets, etc." M. Brémond also produced modern books in which were a prayer to Saint Christopher to keep off sudden death; an oraison to Saint Vite for defence against the rage of ferocious animals; an invocation to Saint Blaise for the cure of sore throat, and a pious invocation to Saint Magnus for protection against venomous insects. M. Brémond, in addition, promised his friend a copy of Paul Parfait's *l'Arsenal de la dévotion*, in which he could revel in superstition to his heart's

content. M. Brémond, on reading that the Queen of Spain was expecting her confinement, and had been provided with a bone of Saint John the Baptist, the comb of the Virgin Mary, containing three of her hairs; a chemiset of N. S. Jesus Christ, together with a reserve relic in case the fœtus would exhibit signs of recalcitrant royalty, the body of blessed Diégo de Alcala, suggested in his piquant, skeptical French manner, as a grand completion to this arsenal of saintly obstetrical aids, the following:

1. A wax taper from Notre-Dame-de-Montserrat, which the reverend Pierre de Bourdeilles, Lord of Brantôme, declares, in his fourth chapter of *Des dames galantes*, a strong aid to the Spanish ladies in childbirth.

2. The reliques of Saint Marguerite, which served Marie de Médicis so well, as told in the works of the celebrated midwife, Louise Bourgeois. But despite the assistance of the relics and the incessant prayers at Saint-Germain-des-Pres., she lay in agony 22 hours.

3. A piece of the robe of Saint Ignace, which R. P. Terwecoren says is equally efficacious to the mother fearing pregnancy, and the female who trembles lest the soft name of mother will never greet her ear.

4. An agnus of white wax coming from the Chapelle Sixtine, which the Canon Barbier de Montault remarks protects both mother and child during pregnancy and deliverance, and shortens and ameliorates the throes of labor.

5. A cordon of blue wool from Saint Joseph to

expedite matters; for, says R. P. Huguet, "what is impossible for the doctors is easy for Saint Joseph."

6. The oraison of Sainte-Croix discovered in 1550, and reprinted in 1880, in Paris, in which are these words: "When a female finds herself in pregnancy, she is expected to read or repeat this prayer, or to carry it on her, and she will be expeditiously delivered; she will remain a tender mother, and when the infant is born, if the prayer is placed on its right side, it will be preserved from a great number of accidents." After generously offering these suggestions to the royal Christine, M. Brémond adds:

7. *A pair of forceps.* It happens sometimes that this instrument is not unuseful in accouchements, even of royalty. In the case of another Spanish woman of the royal blood, Eugénie de Montijo, in spite of a strong armament of saints' bones collected by herself and her august spouse, the "fers de l'accoucher" sensibly flattened the ears of the youthful scion, who was called by Cassagnac "Napoleon IV.," and who eventually offered up his life to the British Government in the war with idolaters in Africa.

To complete the list of the virtues and powers ascribed to the saints would take this short sketch too far. At first glance, many of these facts seem exaggerated and almost incredible; but when we have before us in our own day the much-vaunted powers of the waters of Lourdes, with their enormous patronage, drawn from the high as well as the low classes, and from every section of the world; the almost daily pilgrimages to other famous wells and shrines; the custom, still extant, of the exposition

of saintly relics for therapeutic purposes; the frequent account of faith-cures in this country as well as in the old, we can readily believe that the world is by no means lifted from its superstitious ignorance by the rapid advances of pathology, and, strange to say, the very countries that have done most to advance science are the most tenacious in their old medieval fears and faiths.